

**CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS****Research Findings**  
**No.14/2019**

# **Children, Young People & Families Early Intervention and Adult Learning & Empowering Communities Fund Evaluation Final Report**

Iconic Consulting

The CYPFEI & ALEC Fund is supporting the core services and infrastructure of 117 national third sector organisations (one organisation withdrew). It aims to increase the effectiveness of services and policies that prioritise prevention and early intervention and improve outcomes for children, young people, families and adult learning. A Baseline Report was published in 2016 summarising the initial evaluation findings and an Interim Report assessing progress to mid-2018 and the emerging impact was published in 2018. This report is intended to inform discussions regarding the future of funding in this policy area.

## **Conclusions**

The CYPFEI & ALEC Fund has provided valuable support to 118 third sector organisations during the period 2016 to 2019. The organisations have not only benefitted from significant financial support worth approximately £14 million per annum, they have also benefitted from a comprehensive Support and Engagement Programme delivered by the Corra Foundation, as well as the support of a named Policy Officer within Scottish Government or Education Scotland. The Fund has helped sustain and strengthen the third sector organisations and the services they deliver in the areas of children, young people, families, adult learners and communities. The key successes and learning points from the evaluation are summarised below.

## **Successes**

The funded organisations have successfully delivered on the outcomes they defined at the outset and we therefore conclude that the Fund has contributed at a national level towards improving outcomes for children, young people, families, adult learners and communities. The extent of the Fund's contribution at a national level should, however, be viewed in the context of its inputs relative to other initiatives, funding streams and organisations.

Throughout this evaluation, the funded organisations identified the availability of core funding, which could be applied with a degree of flexibility, over a three year period (subject to satisfactory progress) as the most significant benefit of the CYPFEI & ALEC Fund. The funded organisations emphasised that the impact of the funding was far greater than the financial value of the awards as they repeatedly stated the Fund enhanced organisational capacity and provided a degree of security which aided planning, development and sustainability. For some organisations improved capacity involved taking on additional staff in a variety of operational and strategic roles, for others it involved improved systems, back office functions or training which freed up time for existing staff including frontline workers.

Alongside enhanced organisational capacity, benefits were also evident in terms of the skills and knowledge available within funded organisations. The CYPFEI & ALEC Fund enabled many funded organisations to recruit, retain and develop staff with the additional skills and knowledge they sought. Several organisations noted that enhancing skills and knowledge helped improve service delivery and their focus on early intervention and prevention. In addition, Corra Foundation's Support and Engagement programme was highlighted as an important factor in improving skills and knowledge through attendance at training sessions, seminars and the annual conference.

The evaluation has also shown that the CYPFEI & ALEC Fund helped to sustain and improve formal and informal partnerships between third sector organisations. In some cases these were new relationships, often facilitated by the Corra Foundation or Policy Officers, and in other cases they built on existing relationships between third sector organisations. Funded organisations reported that the partnerships helped improve services, raise awareness and the profile of organisations, and enhanced knowledge sharing and learning.

Early intervention and prevention has been a priority for the third sector organisations for a number of years, driven by the overarching policy context which promotes a preventative approach to reduce demand on public services and tackle inequalities. The evaluation demonstrated that CYPFEI & ALEC funding has helped to sustain and improve the embedding of this ethos in the third sector organisations supported by the Fund. Some funded organisations were able to develop new services focused on early intervention or prevention whereas other funded organisations refined or added to existing services focused on these issues. It was noteworthy that intermediary organisations reported the benefits of CYPFEI & ALEC funding on early intervention and prevention as well as funded organisations working directly with children, young people and families.

The impact of the CYPFEI & ALEC Fund has also been evident in internal Scottish Government/Education Scotland processes and ways of working and the Policy Officer role was highlighted as a key factor. The role was an integral part of the CYPFEI & ALEC Fund providing third sector organisations with a named point of contact within Scottish Government/Education Scotland. The main impact was evident in improved information sharing between Scottish Government/Education Scotland staff and the funded organisations. For example, Scottish

Government/Education Scotland staff reported sharing information with funded organisations on relevant consultations, policies or initiatives, and funded organisations shared information on service developments as well as research and evaluation findings. Some Policy Officers suggested their knowledge and understanding of third sector organisations, and the issues they are addressing had directly informed their policy work.

## Learning points

The evaluation identified learning points in terms of monitoring. The number and variety of outcomes set by the funded organisations hindered efforts to evaluate the overall impact of the Fund at a national level. This task would have been improved if Fund-specific outcomes had been set at the outset by the funder. Given the Fund's focus on strengthening third sector organisations, it would also have been beneficial, in our view, if the outcomes related to organisational issues rather than beneficiaries. In addition, smaller organisations, and those receiving relatively small grants, questioned a monitoring regime that did not take issues of scale into account. Organisations of varying size and grant funding also raised concerns about the time required to collate and report monitoring information. A more proportionate and streamlined monitoring regime should therefore be considered in the future.

Although the Policy Officer role was viewed positively overall, variation in how the role was fulfilled was an issue throughout the evaluation. Some funded organisations experienced changes to their named Policy Officer over the life of the Fund and some had limited contact with their Policy Officer(s). A consistent approach to the role and continuity among Scottish Government/Education Scotland staff would therefore be beneficial in the future.

## Concluding remarks

Overall, this evaluation has demonstrated the benefits of financial and non-financial support provided by the CYPFEI & ALEC Fund to 118 third sector organisations. The Fund has helped sustain and strengthen the third sector organisations and the services they deliver in the areas of children, young people, families, adult learners and communities.

### How to access background or source data

The data collected for this social research publication:

- ☐ are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- ☒ are available via an alternative route using the following link  
<https://www.gov.scot/policies/poverty-and-social-justice/funding/>
- ☐ may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact <email address> for further information.
- ☐ cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.



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